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# The Aristotelian Concept of Happiness

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THE ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPT  
OF HAPPINESS

BY  
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
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### VITA

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## CHAPTER I

### EΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ - ITS USE IN GREEK

Before beginning this discussion of Aristotle's position on happiness, we ought first to consider how he and other Greek writers have used the word εὐδαιμονία and what meanings have been attached to that word and its cognates. Advancing from the early Greek writers down to Plato and Aristotle, we find that the word has undergone some very interesting changes.

The word itself is etymologically constructed of two distinct words, both very frequently employed in Homer, εὐ and δαίμων. This latter, Liddell and Scott tell us, is of the same root as δαίωμα, δαίνυμι, δαίς; and means "one who distributes a part." Hence, δαίμων originally referred to anyone who gave a share or portion to someone, but was properly applied to a god who gave those things which men have. δαίμονες were all of these gods. Homer calls them δωτήρες ἑών.<sup>1</sup> These δαίμονες were, in general, favorable beings; although Homer occasionally speaks of a δαίμων καχός, στυγερός.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, however, by an extrinsic denomination, the word was applied to the part that was given to and was possessed by man.

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1 Od. 8, 325.

2 Ibid. 5, 396; 10, 634.

Thus, the word became equivalent to  $\mu\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ . Hector tells Diomede:  $\mu\acute{\alpha}\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\iota\ \delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\varsigma\ \delta\acute{\omega}\omega$ .<sup>3</sup> Evidently these refer to the "lot" or "share" or "due."

The meaning does not remain fixed at this point but is further made synonymous with  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$ , fortune. Festugière says:

On lit en même temps: "Beaucoup ont le coeur mauvais, mais une bonne fortune": chez d'autres, "le vouloir est bon, mais ils gémissent sous le poids d'une mauvaise fortune," le "distributeur de parts" et la "part Distribuée" finissent ainsi par se confondre avec  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$ . ...  $\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu\iota\alpha\iota$  sont dites les qualités qu'on tient de la nature et que fait triompher la Bonne Fortune ( $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\tau\upsilon\chi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ) (Pind. Nem I, 9-10). Rien d'étonnant à voir Aristophane unir comme deux synonymes  $\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu$  et  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$ : "selon la part assignée par le distributeur divin" ou "selon la part fortune," c'est même chose.<sup>4</sup>

Thus we can trace the general evolution of the word: distributor of parts, the parts distributed, fortune.

This word in its primitive use reveals an early existence of a predominant characteristic of the Greeks, their intensely religious outlook. These gifts were given man by the gods, beings greater than him and upon whom he was dependent. Gradually, however, as their simplicity faded,

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3 Ibid. 8,166

4 Festugiere, A.J., Contemplation et Vie Contemplative Selon Platon, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1936: 270.

the Greeks lost this outlook; and, consequently, the word lost its original meaning. First, it was divorced from the gods, "a part;" then identified with "chance," "fate," "fortune." Only later, as we shall see, did the philosophical writers tend to restore the religious significations. Aristotle sees in this "part " a θεῖόν τι.<sup>5</sup>

εὐδαιμονία will be found to have a similar evolution of meaning. It means "the good lot; one has received." Festugiere sees in the word in its earlier development a religious signification but insists that it shortly lost this meaning.

Et, sans doute, le mot implique, dans le principe, une idée religieuse; cette bonne part nous a été distribuée par la divinité; tout bien, tout mal aussi, nous vient des dieux. Mais le sens religieux ne va pas au delà, et il ne faut pas encore l'entendre comme une habitation de Dieu en nous.<sup>6</sup>

We ask further: in what did this εὐδαιμονία consist according to various Greek authors. Homer, strange to say, does not use the word, even though he frequently employs its constituent parts. In its place he uses the word ὅλβιος to refer to a purely material prosperity. To these

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5 Ethica Nicomachea: 1177<sup>b</sup>.

6 Festugière: Op. Cit. 271.

material gifts Odysseus refers when he says: καὶ γὰρ ἐνὶ ποτ' ἔμελλον ἐν ἀνδράσιν ὄλβιος εἶναι .<sup>7</sup> It is first in the Homeric Hymns that εὐδαιμονία occurs. In the address to Athene: χαῖρε, θεά, δὸς δ' ἄμμι τύχην εὐδαιμονίην τε <sup>8</sup> and from the context, we find εὐδαιμονία is a type of prosperity and happiness resulting from the fortunate outcome of an impending war. It is a gift not to one individual, but to the people in general, and consists in purely material prosperity with security from the enemy. The word, moreover, may apply to the good lot acquired from working the land as in the case of the peasant, Hesiod:

τάων εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὄλβιος ὅς τάδε πάντα  
εἶδως ἐρφάζηται ἀναίτιος ἀθανατοῖσιν,  
ὄρνιθας κρίνων, καὶ ὑπερβασίας ἀλεείνων.

Add to this the comment made by Robinson:

Non sunt intelligendae omnes ὑπερβασίαι,  
sed eae demum, quae comittuntur contra auspicio-  
rum disciplinam, ut verba proxime antecedentia suadent. ὑπερ-  
βασίαι enim dicuntur quaevis delicta,  
quibus modum limites a ratione positos transilimus.<sup>10</sup>

We see, then, that this is a material good; following, however,

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7 Od. 18, 138

8 Homeric Hymns, 19, 5.

9 Hesiod: Opera et Dies, 824.

10 Robinson, Thomas: ἩΙΟΔΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΣΚΡΑΙΟΥ ΤΑ ΕΥΡΕΣΚΟΜΕΝΑ  
e Theatro Sheldoniano, Oxonii, 1737. p. 469. Commentary  
to line 827 of the text.



upon certain moral observances accompanying the working of the land. Pindar associates happiness with the honor and glory of physical prowess conjoined with the prosperity of one's children. This is evident in his tenth Pythian Ode:

εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὑμνητὸς οὗτος ἀνὴρ γίγνεται  
 ὃς ἂν χερσὶν ἢ ποδῶν ἀρετῇ κρατήσας  
 τὰ μέγιστ' ἀέθλων ἔλῃ τόλμα τε καὶ σθένει,  
 καὶ ζῶων ἔτι νεαρὸν  
 κατ' αἶσαν θίδν ἴδῃ τύχοντα στεφάνων Πυθίων.

However, he also recognized the inability of honor, eating, and sensual pleasure to satisfy, thus admitting that something more is needed.<sup>12</sup> Solon requires a large number of conditions for one to be happy. The city must be at peace; the children, good and fair to behold; there must be sufficient wealth to allow the individual to live according to the norms of the day; his death must be glorious; and he must be commemorated with national honors. Herodotus quite frankly identifies εὐδαιμονία with wealth, and the εὐδαίμονες are those who can afford beef, horses, and lamb on the occasion of their birthdays.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere, he speaks of the happy states which fall and the poor states which rise; thus seeming to mean those possessing wealth as contrasted with those in poverty.<sup>14</sup> Thucydides finds no trouble in grouping the εὐδαίμονες among

11 Pindar: Pythian Odes, x, 22-26

12 Pindar: Nemean Odes, vii, 83.

13 Herodotus: L, 133

14 Herodotus: L, 5.

the rich who were able to afford costly tunics and adorn themselves with gold.<sup>15</sup>

It is not until we come to the dramatists that we find happiness assuming the form of a moral condition. Sophocles says: "They are the happy who have never known evil."<sup>16</sup> That this evil is religious can be seen from the rest of the strophe. Jebb interprets σεῖσθῃ θεόθεν as follows:

Sin, ἀτιά, likened to a storm or earthquake, that shakes a building. When a sin has once been committed, and the shock of divine punishment has once been felt . . . .<sup>17</sup>

Friendship with the gods occasioned by one's being right-minded (εὖφρων) seems to be the reason why Aeschylus is not averse to calling Cyrus εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ.<sup>18</sup>

The philosophers are the first really to hit upon the notion of happiness as it should be understood according to its essence. Plato proposes the question in various places but primarily in the Gorgias. There we find him using εὐδαιμονία very frequently, endeavoring to define it. Of the King of Persia he says; οὐδὲ τὸν μέγαν βασιλέα ; . . εὐδαίμονα ὄντα<sup>19</sup>, and he adds further along in the argument the reason:

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15 Thucydides: I, 6.

16 Sophocles: Antigone, 582

17 Jebb, Richard Sophocles' Plays and Tragedies: Pt. III, Antigone. Cambridge: University Press, Note to 583.

18 Aeschylus: Persae, 768, 773.

19 Plato: Gorgias, 470<sup>e</sup>

wealth, power, riches in general are not sufficient to declare a man happy. Continuing, he says:

τὸν μὲν γὰρ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα καὶ  
 γυναῖκα εὐδαίμονα εἶναί φημι, τὸν δὲ  
 ἄδικον καὶ πονηρὸν ἄθλιον.

Plato allows no doubt to remain about the meaning of εὐδαιμονία. A man may have all the wealth in the world; but unless he has these virtues, he is not εὐδαίμων. In his Republic he repeats once more: ὁ γε εὖ ζῶν μακάριός τε καὶ εὐδαίμων, ὁ δὲ μὴ τ' ἀναντία. To this assertion Thrasyarchus asks: πῶς γὰρ οὗ; Socrates answers: ὁ μὲν δίκαιος ἄρα εὐδαίμων, ὁ δ' ἄδικος ἄθλιος.<sup>21</sup> But to Aristotle is left the task of defining the essence of happiness. In his Ethica Nicomachea he defines εὐδαιμονία:

τὸ ἀνθρωπίνον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετὴν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν τελειοτάτην καὶ ἀρίστην.

Elsewhere he says: δοκεῖ δ' ὁ εὐδαίμων βίος κατ' ἀρετὴν εἶναι.<sup>23</sup>

In the Politics<sup>24</sup> as well as in the Ethics, εὐδαιμονία is identified with εὐπραγία and εὖ ζῆν. There is no doubt left that Aristotle has forsaken the earlier notions of happiness, consisting largely in material welfare, and transferred the word to its proper sphere, that of activity of the higher part

20 Ibid.

21 Republic: 354<sup>a</sup>

22 Eth. Nic., 1098<sup>a</sup>

23 Ibid., 1177<sup>a</sup>

24 Politics, 1325<sup>a</sup>, 1331<sup>b</sup>

of man. He does not completely divorce εὐδαιμονία from τύχη, but makes the latter very secondary.

All that we have seen can be briefly summarized as follows. Although originally signifying an internal quality given by a god or genius, εὐδαιμονία lost that meaning by the time of the Homeric Hymns and was used by the earlier Greeks to represent material prosperity and wealth. Plato and Aristotle revived the original notion, an internal condition, and crystallized it by showing it was virtue, or activity in accordance with virtue. They emphasized the intrinsic quality, but nowhere do they exclude good fortune. Hence, it ought to be said that, with the emphasis placed upon the notion of activity, they wed both concepts into the one term: good fortune, moral goodness; wealth and weal.

## CHAPTER II

### ARISTOTLE CONCLUDES TO HAPPINESS

In setting himself the task of exploring the field of Politics (which he makes the "master-craft" embracing Ethics<sup>1</sup>), Aristotle merely follows in the paths of Greek thought; for all the great thinkers from Homer down to his own teacher, Plato, considered they had the task of treating this topic. Solon, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, Democritus are a few of the great names associated with this topic. The poets, too, had their representatives such as Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Pindar, and Sappho. These mention the topic only in passing words; but, nevertheless, their treatment presupposes a vast amount of thought on the question. Aristotle, in fact, followed every son of Hellas, for each one was concerned with these problems: "Why do I exist? Why do I have the sense of obligation? What is it that I am constantly seeking?"

For the divining mind of Aristotle, there is little hesitancy in answering the question underlying each of these problems: man does all this for one purpose, to be happy, to

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1 Eth. Nic. 1094<sup>a</sup>, 24. "Now it would be agreed that it [the Supreme Good, the subject of Ethics and Politics] must be the object of the most authoritative of the sciences - some ~~whence~~ which is pre-eminently a master-craft. But such is manifestly the science of Politics."

attain the end for which man exists. In the Ethica Nicomachea,<sup>2</sup> with little time spent on the answers to those problems offered by preceding thinkers, he passes on to the answer offered before but thought out anew for himself. That answer is happiness.

His reason for concluding to the fact that happiness must be the answer to these problems faced by Ethics is solidly founded on the principle that everything must have an end. Basing his argument on the sound ἀρχή established by himself in the Politics that "nature does nothing in vain,"<sup>3</sup> and that this object which nature intends must be a good,<sup>4</sup> he concludes that the good aimed at by one's actions must be a good which is desirable in itself and not for something else. It must be an ultimate good. This is the case; otherwise, the intentions of the agent would proceed εἰς ἄπειρον. Through an argumentum ad hominem, it is obvious that this good is happiness; though in what it consists, Aristotle must better define.

This much without further add, Aristotle is able to say about happiness. It fulfills the requirements set down by the preliminary argument. It is a good (which all admit) and it is ultimate; certainly ultimate or final, for everything else that man does is sub-ordinated to it; whereas it is sub-

2 Ibid., 1095<sup>b</sup>, 12-1097<sup>a</sup>, 14.

3 Pol., 1253<sup>a</sup>, 9. (οὐθεν γὰρ ἡ φύσις ποιεῖ μάτην.)

4 Eth. Nic., 1094<sup>a</sup>, 3.

ordinated to none.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves . . . but we choose each of them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, happiness is self-sufficient, that is, it is the most desirable of all goods and lacking in nothing. Aristotle conceives of this self-sufficiency as consisting in two things. First, that it be perfect happiness irrespective of parents, sons, or friends. It is not necessary that these persons should have to contribute to the state of happiness either by adding some element to that state such as companionship; or by receiving something from the happy man such as wealth, advice, or further learning. On the other hand, it must be self-sufficient from the material side, needing neither wealth, good-health, nor other material goods except in a slight degree for its maintenance. That some are required, Aristotle admits, but merely as a condition and not as a cause which would enter intrinsically into happiness.

At this point, it may be mentioned that Aristotle comes

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5 Ibid., 1097<sup>b</sup>,1. (All translations from Aristotle are those made by W.D. Ross.)

a characteristic of happiness insisted upon by Christian philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Happiness must be a status stabilis et quietus vitae in which all desires are supplied and anything needed to complement the nature of man is not lacking.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in his explanation of the self-sufficiency of happiness, Aristotle is mindful of the fact that happiness is not just one good placed at the side of honors, riches, health, and beauty, but like a category which includes simultaneously all of the minor goods. James A. Stewart<sup>8</sup> is partly correct in his analogy of Aristotle's concept of happiness to Plato's Form of Good. There is a great similarity between the two of them. The individual good has its being only through its participation in the being of the Form of good. The individual elements of happiness have their being only because of their participation in happiness. But Stewart errs in two points in claiming Aristotle "virtually maintains all that Plato intended for in his doctrine of the Idea of the Good." First, Stewart considers happiness as the Form of man.<sup>9</sup> If this were

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica: 1<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>ae</sup>, q.4, art.4; art.8. Eth. Nic. 1097<sup>b</sup>, 8-22  
<sup>2</sup> Stewart, J.A.: Notes on The Nic. Eth., Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1892, 2 vols.: 1, 95-96.  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 95: "It is the Form and organization of man's powers and opportunities" and εὐδαιμονία is life."



true, then Stewart would have to reconcile the contradictory notes in Plato's Forms and the forms of Aristotle. For Plato's Forms are subsistent, separated from all else,<sup>10</sup> whereas Aristotle maintains that happiness is a single entity in each individual and hence numerically multiple. Now, with regard to Stewart's contention that happiness is man's Form, he has the problem of explaining how Aristotle could hold that happiness is the form of man and at the same time the operation of this form. For in the first book<sup>11</sup> we find that happiness is the "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue." In Aristotelian language, the soul is the form of man. The activity of the soul must be accomplished through some faculty of the soul. This faculty and its activity must be accidents inhering in the substance and yet really distinct from the substance. In this case the activity would be an accident, distinct from the soul, yet inhering in it. Hence, happiness is at least once removed from the soul and in no wise the soul, or form, itself. Supposing, further, that Stewart were right in maintaining that happiness is the soul. He has the additional problem of showing that Aristotle held that the soul was a separately existing being, the Form or Idea, such as Plato would hold.

Stewart is drawn into this discussion of the Form of

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10 Plato: Republic: 514<sup>a</sup> - 519<sup>e</sup>.

11 Eth. Nic. 1098a, 17.

happiness in an endeavor to explain the seemingly difficult text<sup>12</sup> wherein Aristotle insists that happiness should not be reckoned as one among the rest of the goods. A much more simple explanation than that offered by Stewart, and one which saves Aristotle's other doctrines can be found. Aristotle does not claim that the happiness of man cannot be augmented by material goods; nor that, entitatively, happiness contains all these other goods. He merely wishes to claim for happiness the allaying and quieting of man's reasonable desires.<sup>13</sup>

Leaving the discussion as it stands, we pass on to Aristotle's further analysis of happiness. It remains to be seen

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12 Ibid. 1097<sup>b</sup>, 16. ἔτι τε πάντων αἰρετωτάτην μὴ συναριθμουμένην δὲ δῆλος ὡς αἰρετωτέραν μετὰ τοῦ ἐλαχίστου τῶν ἀγαθῶν. ὑπεροχῇ γὰρ ἀγαθῶν γίνεται τὸ προστιθέμενον, ἀγαθῶν δὲ τὸ μείζον αἰρετώτερον αἰεὶ."

13 St. Thomas Aquinas: In Decem Libros Ethicorum Aristotelis Ad Nicomachum Expositio, Ed. Pirotta-Gillet, Turin, Italy, Marietti, 1934: Lec. 9, 115-116. "Aliquid autem dicitur etiam solitarium, vel nullo alio connumerato, esse sufficiens, in quantum continet omne illud, quo indiget homo ex necessitate.

"Et sic felicitas de qua nunc loquitur habet de se sufficientiam, quia in se continet illud quod potest homini advenire. Unde potest melior fieri aliquo alio addito. Non tamen remanet desiderium hominis inquietum quia desiderium ratione regulatum, quale oportet esse felicitis, non habet inquietudinem de his quae non sunt necessaria, licet sunt possibilia adipisci. Hoc est ergo quod dicit maxime inter omnia convenire felicitate, quod etiam ipsa non connumerata aliis sit eligibilis.

"Tamen si connumeretur alicui alteri in minimo bonorum, manifestum est, quod erit eligibilior, cuius ratio est quia per appositionem fit superabundantia, vel augmentum boni. Quanto autem aliquid est magis bonum, tanto est eligibile."

in what the Philosopher believes this final end of man consists; what element it is that must be superadded to man's nature to call him happy. There are only two steps more to take in the positive direction. Then, to conclude his arguments, Aristotle, by a negative approach, gives his reasons for refusing to accept those qualities which illustrious men before him have termed happiness.

It has already been stated, in discussing Stewart's interpretations, that Aristotle considers man's happiness consists in the "active exercise of the soul in conformity with excellence or virtue; or, if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and most perfect among them." Now, this passage needs further explanation, but first we ought to see the principles Aristotle employs to make the statement.

The argument is founded upon man's functions. Since the end of a being, Aristotle argues, can be achieved only through its operation, the end proper to a being can be ascertained only from that operation which is proper to the being. Now, the only operation or function proper to man and distinguishing him from the animals is that of his soul. Therefore, happiness should be sought in the use of the faculties of the soul. Since each man has those faculties, whether he use them or not, each must exercise them to be called happy. He must reduce the potencies to actuality and actively produce a new

being in his make-up. This new being or act is called happiness. But Aristotle is wisely aware of the fact that, since man possesses a free will, he is able to use the faculties in a way repugnant to his own nature, and thereby render himself unhappy. This explains why the exercise of the faculty must be in conformity with excellence or virtue. So we find that the function of the soul, the only faculty proper to man, yields happiness provided that it is used in conformity with the laws man's nature demands; or, in other words, in accordance with virtue.

It would be out of place here to discuss how virtue is determined and by the use of what means the faculty is brought into conformity with virtue. It must be sufficient for the present to show why such a conformity is necessary. The faculty, we have seen, must operate according to the nature of man in order that the end of man can be achieved. Since virtue is the regulation of man's actions so as to make them conform with his nature, it follows logically that the virtue which regulates the action of the highest faculty of man will bring that faculty into harmony with his nature and in that way will direct the faculty to happiness.

A further question presents itself to Aristotle's mind when he looks at the words, "active exercise" and "the best and most perfect among the virtues." What is this exercise? What must be exercised and in conformity with which virtue?

It is in the tenth book of the Ethics that he finally gives an answer to these questions. It must be the exercise of the intellect of man in conformity with all virtue in contemplating truth in which happiness is to be had.

That which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life, therefore, is also the happiest.<sup>14</sup>

Just how does Aristotle come to the conclusion that the life of the intellect is the source of happiness? The life of the intellect is the life of the noblest faculty of man. The soul in man's body raises him to a level which the beasts can never reach. The soul with its own functions determines the specific difference between man and brute, making man essentially superior. Since, then, the soul and its activities are proper to man, it is right that the faculties of the soul be proclaimed the highest. On the other hand, the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects. They embrace not only sensible objects (known per accidens), but also immaterial objects and always under the form of truth. Again, intellectual activity is the most continuous and most self-sufficient of all man's activities; most continuous "since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can do anything;"<sup>15</sup> most self-sufficient,

14 Eth. Nic. 1178<sup>a</sup>, 5.

15 Ibid. 1177<sup>a</sup>, 22.

for while a philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Aristotle claims that the activity of the intellect is the most pleasant of virtuous activities. On five scores, then, Aristotle pleads his cause for intellectual activity. This activity is happiness in view of its own nature, the nature of its object, the continuity and self-sufficiency of the action, and, finally, the pleasure accompanying the action.

In addition, Aristotle settle for us the problem of the objectum formale of reason in its enjoyment of happiness. In the tenth book of the Ethics he says:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine . . . the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Ibid. 1177<sup>a</sup>, 29.

17 Ibid. 1177<sup>a</sup>, 11.

As this statement stands, Aristotle merely proves that contemplation is happiness. If we remember, however, his discussion in the sixth book concerning intellectual virtues, we can see that it is philosophic wisdom; for there he says:

But again it [practical wisdom] is not supreme over philosophic wisdom, i.e., over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health.<sup>18</sup>

A paraphrase of these two quotations will clarify Aristotle's position. The argument would run something like this if arranged in a sorites. "Practical wisdom is not superior to philosophic wisdom; therefore, philosophic wisdom is the highest activity. But, contemplation is philosophic wisdom; therefore, contemplation is the highest activity. Now, if the highest activity is happiness, then, contemplation is happiness." Hence, to be happy, a man must contemplate both scientific knowledge and intuitive intelligence as regards the things of the most exalted nature; he must "not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles;"<sup>19</sup> he must be a lover of wisdom, a philosopher, who does not hesitate to embrace as matter of consideration all the realms of being; he must search out the founts of knowledge, grasp hold of the formal, material, efficient, final, and exemplary causes of all things and examine them.

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18 Ibid. 1145<sup>a</sup>, 6.

19 Ibid. 1141<sup>a</sup>, 16.

We are in a position now to point out in a few words an accurate description of happiness. This Zeller has done for us.

The happiness of man can, in fact, consist only in his activity, or more accurately in that activity which is proper to him as man. What kind of activity is this: Not the general vital activity, which he shares even with plants; not the sensitive activity, which belongs to the lower animals as well as to man; but the activity of reason. Now the activity of reason, in so far as it is rightly performed, we call virtue. The proper happiness of man consists, therefore, in virtuous activity or, in as much as there are several such, in the noblest and most perfect of these. But this is the theoretic or pure activity of thought. For it belongs to the noblest faculty and directs itself to the highest object; it is exposed to the least interruption, and affords the highest pleasure; it is least dependent on foreign support and external expedients; it is its own aim and object, and is valued purely for its own sake; in it man arrives at rest and peace, while in the military and political, or in the practical life generally, he is ever restlessly pursuing ends which lie outside the activity itself. Reason is the Divine in us. It is the true essence of the man. The pure activity of reason can alone perfectly accord with his true nature. It alone can afford him unconditional satisfaction, and raise him above the limitations of humanity into the life of God. Next to it comes moral activity, which thus constitutes the second essential element of happiness. Inasmuch, however, as it is the Divine in man which is called into exercise in thought, the latter may be regarded as a superhuman good; whereas moral virtue is in an especial sense the Good of Man.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Zeller, Edward: Aristotle And The Earlier Peripatetics, tr. by Costelloe, Muirhead, London, Longmans, Green, 1897; v. 2, 141-144.



### CHAPTER III

#### ARISTOTLE CONSIDERS ADVERSARIES

Aristotle, as we have seen, arrives at the conclusion that happiness must consist in the active operation of the highest of man's faculties in accordance with virtue, and that this operation is proper to the intellect in contemplation of truth. This can be put down as the thesis expounded and proved in the Nicomachean Ethics. But he knows that the question is left incompletely handled unless he considers those men who have set up other standards of happiness contrary to his own. Hence, he must consider each of the major adversaries to his thesis and reject them one by one. Among these, the most famous is Plato to whom Aristotle devotes most time. Plato had evolved a system which contained flaws and imperfections. To these imperfections, Aristotle has recourse in his refutation.

The great leader of the Academy had, from the beginning, concerned himself with ethical questions: the problems of right and wrong, justice, pleasure, the state as the protector of human welfare and happiness. In the endeavor to settle the problems which arose, Plato had recourse to his system commonly referred to as the Ideas or Forms. To understand and appreciate Aristotle's arguments, one must first get some notion of

what Plato meant and intended by his Ideas or Forms - a task which is none too easy because Plato himself was not altogether clear, and because Platonic interpretations of the Academy have colored our understanding of its leader's meaning. But we shall try to become acquainted with the fundamental notes of the Ideas from the primary sources, Plato's own words.

First, then, why did Plato construct such a system? Throughout all of his discussions, certain fundamental problems constantly recurred: the problem of the one and the many, that of becoming and being, the unity of being, the concepts of Justice and Good. Furthermore, he had the epistemological difficulties of knowledge, reality, learning, sensation, and intellection. He faces, in the Meno, the problem of education and the mind's ability to grasp reality. As a test case, Socrates asks Meno for a definition of virtue. For an answer, he receives an enumeration and description of virtue in a man, woman, child, slave, and "many others." Socrates notes the fact that this is not definition but merely a catalogue. He wants essences. Again, in the Phaedo the question arises whether our senses are trustworthy. This Simmias denies. "How, then," asks Socrates, "does the mind attain to truth? To what is the mind adequate that it may be sure it knows externals?" To all of these answers there is only one solution for Plato - the Forms.

What, then, does Plato consider to be the notes of the

Forms? In no place does he actually in a systematic scheme give us this information as Aristotle would. But he gives the notes when discussing various virtues. As a by-product of the Symposium, Plato seeks to know what beauty is and claims that it is an Idea. Then he describes this Idea as follows:

First always existing and neither coming to be nor being destroyed, neither increasing nor waning, secondly not beautiful in one way and base in another, nor beautiful in one aspect and base in another, nor beautiful now and base again so that it is beautiful to some and base to others; nor again to one (initiated) would the beautiful appear as a guise, as hands or any other part which the body shares, nor as a description or knowledge, nor as being somehow or other in another, as in a living being or in the earth, or in the heaven or in some other thing, but being itself, in itself, with itself, a single form always existing, and all other beautiful things sharing in it in some such way that although the other things become and are destroyed in no wise does it become more or less or suffer anything.<sup>1</sup>

In no other place does Plato list so many notes of the Essences. First, we find that eternity and immutability are absolutely necessary to the Forms. They are, in all respects, unchangeable. The necessity of this note can be easily appreciated when one remembers that problems of change and stability must be answered. Again, the beautiful must be wholly beautiful, "without blemish

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1 Symposium: 211a, f. (All translations of Plato are those made by Jowett.)

or stain;" it must be beautiful at all times, in all places and for all beholders. It must be an absolutely existent being, whose existence is separated from all other beings, and it must have no contact with the individual wherever it may chance to exist. Furthermore, the individual beings obtain their entity from a participation in these Forms. Plato does not state definitely what this participation is although in the Symposium he claims it is μέθεξις. In the Phaedo<sup>2</sup> he tells us that this sharing may happen in three ways: through παρουσία, or actual presence of the Form in the individual, μέθεξις, and κοινωνία.

In addition, as Plato indirectly states in many of the dialogues, the Ideas have a threefold aspect: ontological, teleological, and logical or epistemological. The first concerns the objective reality of the Ideas. They are actual, real substances<sup>3</sup> existing separated from everything else. That they are substances there can be no doubt; for besides the passages just referred to in the Phaedo and Republic, Plato gives us in the Phaedrus<sup>4</sup> the beautiful allegory of the pleasure the gods have while observing the Essences (οὐσίαι). These essences exist in the highest part of heaven, and the

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2 Phaedo: 100d.

3 Ibid: 78d; Repub., 514a, ff.

4 Phaedrus: 247a, ff.

happiness of the gods consists in the clarity with which they contemplate these Essences. Man, too, strives to view these beings; but, because of the jogging of the horses and chariots, he gets only an imperfect knowledge of the Essences. Man falls to earth where knowledge consists in ἀνάμνησις, a remembering or recollection of what had been seen in the heavens in a previous life. There can be no doubt that thus the Ideas are ontological beings; in truth, they are substances existing separated from all other beings, even separated from themselves. This last Plato reiterates in the Parmenides.

With respect to the epistemological side of the Ideas, we see in this same passage of the Phaedrus, along with the discussion of learning propounded in the Meno<sup>5</sup>, that growth in knowledge is a matter of remembering what man has seen in his pre-natal state of existence where, without the body, the soul beheld the Essences or Ideas. Plato tells us that happiness consists in the clear vision of these Ideas, in the knowledge and contemplation of justice, love, truth, and good in general. For in the Phaedo we are told that death is a boon to the philosopher, and that the pursuit of philosophy is but a practice for death. And when death comes, it is merely an introduction to a life of happiness which consists in renewed contemplation of the Ideas.

The third aspect of the Forms is teleological. Briefly,

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6 Meno: 81c, ff.

dized, nevertheless, he boldly pronounced his decisions.

Taney's law practice in Frederick continued to grow, so that he was able, after five years, to marry and establish a home of his own in Frederick. He married Anne Phoebe Key, siter of Francis Scott Key. The Taney home, while not at all pretentious, still stands today on Bentz Street.<sup>26</sup> On the front of the house, near the doorway, is a tablet, bearing this inscription:

In This House Lived  
Roger Brooke Taney  
Chief Justice  
of the Supreme Court  
of the United States  
and his Wife,  
Anne Key Taney,  
Sister of  
Francis Scott Key  
Author of  
"The Star-Spangled Banner"

The Taney home was a happy and harmonious one. The marriage was "a happy and most fortunate" one for Taney. "It seems probable, in view of his fragile health and easily shattered nervous system, that his long life and professional achievements would have been impossible without the solicitous care and devotion of his wife and daughters who were born to them."<sup>27</sup> That Taney loved his family and home is shown by his frequent letters to his wife and children. He also referred to them in letters to others. The

<sup>26</sup>"On April 15, 1930, the home of Roger Brooke Taney in Frederick, Md., was opened as a national shrine. . . Already the little home, with its quaint old wine cellar and slave quarters, has been visited by thousands of tourists from all parts of the United States. Within the first few weeks visitors also registered from Germany, Scotland, China, and Denmark." Delapaine, Edward S., "Visiting the Taney Home", National Republic, Vol. 18, Sept., 1930, 20.

<sup>27</sup>Swisher, 50.

find that there are at least three notes proper to good: it is the object of desire; it is self-sufficient; and it is measure. With regard to the first, Plato tells us that it is the goal of all wish, action, and art.

For the sake of good, then, those who do, do all these things . . . Therefore, do we admit that we do not want that which we do for the sake of something, but that we want the thing for which we do it?<sup>7</sup>

If you recall, we think that all things ought to be done for the sake of the good . . . and do you agree with us that the end of all deeds is the good, and that for its sake all other things should be done and not it for the sake of the rest? Yes.<sup>8</sup>

It is the object of all nature and desired by all types of being: the rational, the irrational, the animal, the plant, by the whole universe. Plato begins by asking for the good that man desires and ends up by claiming that the entire world with all its categories of being seeks it. He becomes more definite in the Philebus when he says that "every intelligent being pursues it the good desires it, wishes to catch it and get possession of it."<sup>9</sup> From these passages there can be little doubt that Plato considered the good as the ultimate end of man, even though he may not state the fact as clearly as Aristotle does.

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The second note proper to the good is self-sufficiency.

7 Gorgias: 468b.

8 Ibid. 499e.

9 Philebus: 20d.

Again in the Philebus Plato writes:

Must the class of good be perfect or not perfect? Certainly, the most perfect of all things, Socrates. But in what? Is the good sufficient? How can it be otherwise? And in this it surpasses all other things.<sup>10</sup>

By the notion of self-sufficiency, Demos tells us Plato intends

a causal category; to be self-sufficient is to be master of one's destiny. The good man is unaffected by the vicissitudes of life even by the death of those nearest to him (Repub. 387d). He is independent of his surroundings; as far as is possible to man, his actions as his beliefs are self-determined. The immortal soul moves, but is not moved by, other things; it is self-moving. Self-sufficiency is also a formal notion. To be self-sufficient is not to require anything else and so to be definite. Thus worth consists in "in-itselfness" or self-hood. Now, in so far as something is definitely "this" and not "that," it is really real. The notion of self-sufficiency merges into that of the really real. In sum, worth attaches to being, simpliciter; and anything, in so far as it really is, is good. It is good to be.<sup>11</sup>

We referred to the good as being the measure of all things. This characteristic takes us back to the teleological aspect of the Forms. In Plato's scheme of "creation," the good is the supreme Idea, the pattern and the cause of all beings beneath it. God, in this scheme, must make creatures

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10 Ibid.

11 Demos: Op. Cit. 53.



in conformity with the pattern of good. Furthermore, Plato maintains that the Ideas suffer no influence or change because they are absolutely independent of the world and of themselves. Therefore, this would hold true of the Idea of good. On the other hand, the good is the cause of man's cognitions and intellection in an efficient way because it is the cause of the shadows within the cave. Finally, it is toward the Idea that man turns in an endeavor to grasp truth and perfect reality. It is man's nature not to spend his entire life gazing at the shadows, but rather to tear himself away from them and turn towards the bright true light of the good. Thus, we find summed up in this locus classicus<sup>12</sup> the three large aspects of the Idea of good - the ontological, the logical, and the teleological.

In the sixth book of the Republic we find them again mentioned. There, in discussing knowledge, Socrates builds up his explanation upon an analogy between the sun and sensations; the good and intellectual perception.

Is it not also true that the sun is not vision, yet as being the cause thereof is beheld by vision itself. . . . This, then, you must understand as what I meant by the offspring of the good which the good begot to stand in a proportion with itself: as the good is in the intelligible region to reason and the objects of reason, so is this in the visible world to vision and the objects of vision.<sup>13</sup>

12 Repub: 514a0 519c.

13 Ibid. 508b.

After stating the similarity between the function of the Form of good and the sun, Socrates proceeds to a fuller explanation of the work of the good.

This reality, then, that gives their truth to the objects of knowledge, and the power of knowing to the knower, you must say is the idea of good, and you must conceive it as being the cause of knowledge and of truth in so far as known.<sup>14</sup>

This much Plato has to say about the Form of good with its epistemological reference to man's intellect. Note, however, that underlying the entire explanation is a presupposition that the Form of good, just like the sun, is a real being existing independently of the mind. This same note is sounded again when Plato brings up the matter of the Form causing the reality of the individual beings.

The sun, I presume you will say, not only furnishes to visibles the power of visibility, but it also provides for their generation and growth and nurture though it is not itself generation . . . . In like manner, then, you are to say that the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power.<sup>15</sup>

There can be little doubt that Plato relied upon the doctrine

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14 Ibid. 508e.

15 Ibid. 509c.

of the Idea of good to explain his theory of morality, government, cosmology, epistemology and ontology. He has insisted constantly upon the absolute existence of the essences, upon their causal aspect of man-kind in the fields of mental and extra-mental reality. It might be well to mention that cause should not be taken as the efficient cause, for nowhere is Plato clear enough for us to draw that conclusion. There is a temptation to claim such causality for the Idea of good, but two difficulties stand in the way. The word cause can be taken in the sense of exemplary cause at all times, and the quality of efficient causality is attributed by Plato to the  $\delta\eta\mu\iota\omicron\upsilon\pi\gamma\acute{o}\varsigma$ .

With this explanation behind us, the examination of Aristotle's arguments for rejecting Plato's doctrine may proceed. In the Ethics Aristotle presents three main objections to Plato. The first, to which there are three parts, is based on the transcendental nature of the concept of good; the second, on the uselessness of the separately existing Form of good; and the third, on the unattainability of a transcendent good.

With regard to the first, we must bear in mind what we said above, namely, that the Idea of good is a unity, remaining unchangeable. It must not take in several different types of good. For did not Plato object to Meno's catalogue of goods? The first part, then, of this argument presented in syllogistic form would run: the concept of good contains in it an order of

priority and posteriority. But the Platonic doctrine of the Idea does not contain such an order. Therefore, the Platonic doctrine of the Form does not agree with the concept of good; and, as a result, the Form as Plato conceives it does not exist. Aristotle's proof of his major is very simple. There is priority and posteriority between substance and accidents, the being which exists in itself, and the being which exists in something else. But good can be predicated of both substance and accidents. Therefore, the concept contains in it an order of priority and posteriority. With regard to the minor, Aristotle appeals to Platonic doctrine and gives an immediate proof with regard to the lack of a single Idea for numbers. It must be noted, however, that Aristotle means a particular type of number. It is the Ideal number of which Aristotle says that they stand in essential and immutable succession to and dependence on each other; and, therefore, can be brought under no common Idea.<sup>16</sup>

In the second part of the argument Aristotle alters his view point slightly and takes as his cue Plato's insistence upon the unchangeableness of the Idea. A single and universal concept, Aristotle says, may not be predicated of more than one category. But the concept of the good transcends all the categories. Therefore, the concept of good is not a single,

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<sup>16</sup> Meta: 991<sup>b</sup>, 21.

universal concept. For a proof to this major, which Aristotle here presupposes, we must turn to another work of his, the Metaphysics, where he insists that λόγος (universal definition) must be unchanging and always of the same comprehension.

There is no destruction of the formula in the sense that it is ever in course of being destroyed. . . . If then demonstration is of necessary truths and definition is a scientific process, and if . . . demonstration and definition cannot vary thus, . . . clearly there can neither be definition of nor demonstration about sensible individuals.<sup>17</sup>

Now in predicating the universal good of substance and quality (universality is basic to definition), the concept must undergo a "destruction," at least in the note of "inseity" or "inaleity." Hence such a universal concept is impossible. His minor stands proven in the first part of the argument and again we find the conclusion that the Ideas are impossible.

The final argument in this group, based upon the universality of concepts, proceeds in the following manner. A single idea must be the object of a single science. But the Idea of good is not a single idea, for it is not the object of a single science. Therefore, there is no Idea of good. Of the two premises here used, the second is easier to grasp, for evidently the good can be the object of Ethics, Politics, flute-playing, and so on through all the fields of science. As for the -----

17 Meta: 1039<sup>b</sup>, 20 - 1040<sup>a</sup>, 7.

first premise, a good bit of doubt overshadows it. It is true that the science of every universal idea has its own formal object. But this does not mean that it might not be included in the field of another science. The sciences of ship-building, carpentry, shoe-making, strategy, and human conduct - each the possessor of its own formal object - is possessed by the science of Politics.<sup>18</sup> Plato is not unlike Aristotle in this; for admitting the individual fields of science, he would still form a super-science (τέχνη ἀρχιτεκτονική) which he calls dialectics embracing all inferior sciences.<sup>19</sup> The argument, therefore, would not seem to do justice to Plato and is itself inconsistent with Aristotle's other ideas.

The second major argument rests on the futility of such a system. It may be claimed, that Platonists might say, that there is a difference between the Idea of good, which is absolute, and the individual goods in the world; that the universal good is more an object of the ἀγαθήτατον βίον simply because it is more enduring. But Aristotle shows that no matter how much more lasting it be, it is still not generically

18 Eth. Nic.: 1094a, 1-17; 30.

19 Grant, Alexander: The Ethics of Aristotle Illustrated with Essays and Notes, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1874. v 1, 439. "This argument is certainly unsatisfactory if applied to Plato's point of view. Plato would say dialectic is the science of the Idea of good, and in this all other science find their meeting-point. Even of the πράκτων ἀγαθόν it might be said that according to Aristotle's own account it falls (in all its manifestations, whether as means or ends) under the one supreme science - Politics."

different. The white is not whiter because it is more enduring. If this is the only argument that can be brought up in the defense of the Ideas, then they are useless and it is futile to defend them. For the result would be that, since there is no difference between the two, between the absolute and phenomena, there is no need of multiplying beings unnecessarily. Hence, we might say that Aristotle's argument in this case is founded upon the principle of "sufficient reason." There must be a sufficient reason for every being's existence which is not found in the Form of good. Therefore, there should not be an unnecessary multiplication of beings by postulating the existence of the Idea of good.

Furthermore, taking the objects of this Form of good, there seems to be a great discrepancy. For the Form of good does not embrace all good in the same way. Some are called good because of their relation to the formal good. Hence, these latter would be called good by analogy, either by the similarity they have to the good or by their relation either as cause or effect of the good. In this case, the Idea is not a perfect unity and cannot be posited as the object of man's activity.

Finally, Aristotle says that the Idea of good is useless for man; for, as Plato admits, it is an absolute reality, separated from all individuals. Now the final end of man is the acquisition and possession of happiness. If, however, the

good cannot be possessed, it is a useless and and not, in any way, to be put down as man's objective.

We can see, then, the different aspects under which Aristotle objects to the Ideas. First, it is not ontologically possible; secondly, it is logically impossible; third, it is useless in the science of Ethics. The objection he raises in regard to the formal object of science seems to me to carry little weight, because he does not consider Plato on his own grounds. His metaphysical arguments are sound; but they can hardly be pronounced original. Plato brings out the uselessness of the Form for man's cognition and thus approaches the last of Aristotle's arguments. He also criticizes them on the point of multiplying beings unnecessarily. Parmenides forces Socrates into the admission that there would have to be an infinite number of Ideas.

But so much for Plato and Aristotle. There are other objections the latter must handle, but this is done easily and quickly. Several qualities or activities of man were selected by various men in which must happiness be said to exist. Such are pleasure, riches, honor, virtue, and health. With a brief consideration of each, Aristotle drops them by the way-side. Pleasure must be discarded, because it is a life suited for cattle and because it is not in accordance with the higher faculties of man. Honor is too superficial, for it depends upon those who confer the honor; nor is it a good proper to the



possessors ἵνα πιστεύωσι ἑαυτοὺς ἀγαθοὺς εἶναι.<sup>19</sup> Also, it is only a means, at best, of being sure that one possesses virtue. Virtue, itself, cannot be happiness; for, as we have seen, it is a habit and may be possessed while asleep. In addition, a virtuous man in suffering misery and misfortune would not be accounted happy.

With this, Aristotle has completed his defense of happiness as he understands it. With the philosophers who have preceded him, he disagrees either because of their superficiality or because of the inherent difficulties with their system. After discarding their proposals, he offers his own answer to the perennial difficulty, backing it up with solid proof.

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19 Eth. Nic.: 1095<sup>b</sup>, 27.

## CHAPTER IV

### ARISTOTLE MAKES HAPPINESS CONTEMPLATION

The last two chapters have dealt with Aristotle's method of arriving at the conclusion that the final end of man is happiness. This treatment has shown how he concludes to the same doctrine as the thinkers who have preceded him. It also shows how Aristotle, differing in his method of discussion, comes to his conclusion by the use of metaphysical argumentation. Ignoring the arguments drawn from custom and universal persuasion, but employing the principle of finality with respect to the functions of man, he concludes that happiness is man's final end. In addition, with this same argument, he proves that happiness is not a matter of superficial enjoyment of money, pleasure, leisure, health, or freedom from worry; nor that it is Plato's Form of good; but that it is the operation or "active exercise of the soul in accordance with virtue, or if there are several, in accordance with the highest of these."

Now it remains to analyse this definition to find out what meaning Aristotle places in each of the words he includes in it. We shall begin with the major division and work to its fine points. The first to be treated will be "activity;" then "soul;" next "virtue" and the types of virtue; finally, "in accordance with the highest virtue." When this has been done,

we can say that we have made an honest attempt to enter into Aristotle's mind and understand the depth of his thought on this greatest of all moral problems. Then, only one thing remains - to evaluate, in some degree, Aristotle's entire thesis under the light of later philosophical and theological doctrines.

To begin, we must consider the expression, "active exercise." This active exercise, or activity, constitutes the generic aspect of Aristotle's definition. By this phrase he wishes to distinguish happiness from mere existence. Happiness is not mere esse, actus primus, but actio, actus secundus. A man does not fulfill his purpose in life by merely existing. He must make use of this existence in some type of activity. The case is similar to the three men in Scripture who received the talents. He who buried his was satisfied with existence. The two who used theirs with good results received the reward. The first got only reproach and condemnation. So, too, Aristotle wishes to show that existence is insufficient.

In addition, by activity Aristotle does not mean δύναμις or mere faculty. He intends ἐνέργεια which is the actus secundus of the faculty. If the faculty were dormant, the problem would resolve again into one of mere existence - useless. Therefore, the conclusion is that the δύναμις must become ἐνέργεια. Happiness must be something vital, living, non-dormant. It is well to note that happiness is not truth; but is

the act of a being in possessing this truth. The latin, possessio veritatis, brings out the idea because possessio not only denotes having a thing but also connotes the active having, the activity on the part of the possessor in holding onto the object possessed. It is the difference between res possessa and possessio rei, between the active voice and the passive voice.

There are, however, various types of activity; but only one which can be called happiness. For this reason, Aristotle insists that it must be found in the soul of man. Happiness must be found in the part of man which differentiates man from the beast. With this word he excludes the pleasures that may be had by the activity of the body. Exercise, comfort, food, the procreative act, all yield pleasure; but they do not constitute happiness. There is more in happiness than these can give; something that calls upon the soul and which will constitute human happiness, not animal pleasure. It may be noted here that these animal pleasures are not mocked by Aristotle. In fact, he recognizes that they can increase happiness but only in an accidental and entirely unessential way. But happiness is in the higher part of man and is an accidens proprium of man provided that man fulfills the conditions required.

Aristotle includes the term virtue among the essential notes of happiness. Then he defines and distinguishes it.

There are several virtues, he tells us. Virtues of the mind and virtues of the will; intellectual virtues and moral virtues. Are all of these to be implied in the words of the definition? It cannot be said that Aristotle holds they must. It would be only a matter of interpreting the general trend of Aristotelian thought if we maintained that Aristotle intended all the virtues to be included. For he expressly states that happiness must be in accordance with the highest virtue. However, it would seem to be against that same general trend if we excluded all the virtues except the highest. For Aristotle is seeking the perfect man and the perfect man must have all virtues.

The division of virtues has been mentioned: the moral virtues, which pertain to the will, and the intellectual virtues, which pertain to the acquisition of truth. He defines moral virtue ( $\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\eta\ \eta\theta\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ ) as a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean.<sup>1</sup> Moral virtues is a  $\xi\acute{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$  which facilitates, by reason of the repetition, the performance of good acts; acts in harmony with the nature of man. The mean, or that which is good for man, is to be determined by practical wisdom about which we shall shortly speak.

The intellectual virtues ( $\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\eta\ \delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\eta\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ ) are states of mind concerned with knowing truth; and the list of these virtues is established by the objectum formale of their activity.

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1 Eth. Nic. 1107<sup>a</sup>, 1.

Thus, they can be classified under the following headings: practical truth, or knowledge of how to secure the ends of human life; art, or knowledge of how to make things; intuitive reason, or knowledge of the principles from which science proceeds; science, or demonstrative knowledge of the necessary and eternal; and philosophic wisdom, the union of intuitive reason and science.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle has an excellent reason for discussing virtue and for including all of the types in the definition of happiness. Through free will it is possible for man to use the faculties not only  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  but also  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . Happiness must be an activity  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ; and, since virtue is  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  while vice  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , happiness must be in accordance with virtue. In this way, Aristotle shows that the ultimate end of man is in harmony with man's nature. This phrase, "in accordance with," sets the standard or norm by which man is to operate and function.

Moral virtues are to enter into happiness in the function of hand-maidens. Temperance, courage, even-temper are the mind's helpers. When one practices them, the intellect is unshackled from the earthiness usually attributed to men. It is the function of moral virtue to ensure the smooth and unimpeded operation of the intellect by removing the internal personal obstacles in the character.

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<sup>2</sup> Eth. Nic. 1139<sup>b</sup>, 15 - 1141<sup>a</sup>, 19.

Intellectual virtues, on the other hand, have a function in happiness proper to each phase of truth. Happiness must be found in the good state of the mind. Now, Aristotle tells us that "of the intellect which is contemplation, not practical nor productive, the good and the bad state are truth and falsity respectively."<sup>3</sup> To insure the good state of the intellect, that is, to insure truth, it is necessary to use the intellect with certain rules of logic (which Aristotle sets forth in his Analytica Priora and Posteriora). It is the function of all the intellectual virtues to apply these rules and principles of thought. But each virtue has its own proper function in happiness. As stated above, there are five virtues of the mind: practical wisdom, art, science, intuitive reason, and philosophic wisdom. The purpose of practical wisdom is to supply the knowledge of the mean in determining the moral virtues. This is to what he refers when Aristotle defines moral virtues by saying:

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.<sup>4</sup>

It is the part of practical wisdom to determine and appoint the middle between the two extremes involved in every virtue.

Thus it can be said that practical wisdom or prudence

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 1139a, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 1107a, 1.

is secondary to the higher faculty of philosophic wisdom, because Aristotle conceives of prudence as a hand-maid. It is the purpose of prudence to clear away internal difficulties to give the other faculty time and opportunity to achieve its own end. By helping man to accomplish his internal functions, overcome his internal difficulties and this in as smooth and efficient way as possible, more leisure will be accorded contemplation. Theophrastus has brought out this operation of prudence very well in a fragment preserved by one of the scholiasts and reprinted by Burnet.

Prudence bears itself to wisdom as the slaves of the masters, who have the care of everything, are related to the despots; for these do everything that must be done in the house in order that their masters may have leisure for their free pursuits, while prudence accomplishes all the practical things in order that wisdom may have time for the contemplation of the most refined things.<sup>5</sup>

Next, it is the function of art to supply the necessities of life. One must remember that art is here used not for the knowledge of painting, music, and sculpture, the so-called fine arts, alone. It refers to any activity that has transient action as its aim. Hence, it means carpentry, baking, shoe-making, as well as flute-playing and dancing. Now, art fits into the scheme of happiness by providing the leisure necessary for contemplation. As the moral virtues under the dictates of

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<sup>5</sup> Burnet, John: The Ethics of Aristotle, London, Methuen and Co., 1900, 502. 1145a, 8, footnote.



practical reason remove all the obstacles to contemplation which may be found in one's character, or emotional or voluntary make-up, so too, art removes all the obstacles which may exist in the environment. For example, it provides the food, clothing, and physical care of the body which may be necessary for sound intellectual operation. It keeps the individual out of penury and misery. In this way, art insures smooth operation by eliminating external distraction.

Science and intuitive reason must combine to present the ideae objectivae for contemplation. It is the purpose of these two virtues to amass, so to speak, the great body of truth which the last faculty will contemplate. Intuitive reason has the task of collecting all the primitive truths; while science will draw certain conclusions about necessary beings by reasoning from the primitive truths. Finally, these virtues arrange this body of truth into one unified system - a masterpiece.

Aristotle inserts a conditional clause into his definition: "if there are several virtues, in accordance with the highest." There are, as we have seen, several virtues of the soul. Now we must find the application of this conditional clause. Aristotle means by this, that, although all virtue is necessary to happiness, the essential virtue is that of philosophic wisdom. He says that happiness must be in accor-

dance with the highest virtue. The reason is that happiness must be the highest end and the rational place to posit happiness would be in the operation of the highest faculty. Now, philosophic wisdom is the highest of the virtues "for philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are the highest by nature."<sup>6</sup> It contains the matter that the intellect will; contemplate as a finished product, perfect in all its detail and unified into one whole picture.

Happiness, then, is the unimpeded pursuit of the intellectual life in the knowledge and possession of immortal truth - unimpeded because it has been unshackled from error and mental sloth by the incorporation of the moral and intellectual virtues. It is the only occupation of man that is truly worthy of his nature. It is, too, the only activity that is most self-sufficient and independent of the other needs of life. To be able to withdraw from all the confusion of everyday life and to concentrate on the things that are noble and ennobling is claimed by Aristotle to be the peak of human attainment. This activity is the only one which can take man out of himself and raise him to the level of divinity.

Whether it be reason or something else  
that is this element which is thought  
to be our natural ruler and guide and  
to take thought of things noble and di-  
vine, whether it be itself also divine  
----- or only the most divine element in us,

6 Eth. Nic. 1141<sup>b</sup>, 2. Cf. also 1141<sup>a</sup>, 19.

the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness.<sup>8</sup>

But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him.<sup>9</sup>

Once again Greek thought has made happiness a θεῖόν τι and into the word εὐδαιμονία injected the ancient and original meaning of a god-given gift (εὐ-δαιμοναί).

To one the least bit acquainted with Catholic philosophical thought, many of these statements will appear truisms, but the fact is that they are giant strides toward perfect truth. Aristotle, in unison with Plato, claims for man kinship with God by participation in intelligence. The soul of man endowed with intellect is become an image of God in a way that, as far as man's nature can demand, is perfect. In the second last quotation, Aristotle reaches the ultimate in the natural knowledge of God. True, there are refinements he has overlooked, but to say that contemplation in God surpasses all other activities in blessedness takes man to the threshold of revelation. The next step is the knowledge of the Trinity. For in this contemplation, the knowledge of God in contem-

7 Ibid. 1177<sup>a</sup>, 13.

8 Ibid. 1178<sup>b</sup>, 21.

9 Ibid. 1177<sup>b</sup>, 25.

plating himself generates the Son, and the love between the two is the spiration of the Holy Ghost. We could never expect Aristotle to attain this conclusion, but we must make note of the intelligence of a pagan which is so nearly Catholic.

Aristotle feels that he has done a slight injustice to the opinions of certain people by rejecting pleasure as the synonym for happiness. Realizing men are undoubtedly seeking pleasure, he finds a place for pleasure in happiness. Not the pleasures of the sense, to be sure, but the pleasures of the soul. Happiness, he insists, is not defined by pleasure. But happiness does have an accidens proprium, a quality that is not of the essence of happiness but which is so closely connected with happiness, that where happiness is, pleasure must also be.

Whether, then, the perfect and supremely happy man has one or more activities, the pleasures that perfect these will be said in the strict sense to be pleasures proper to man, and the rest will be so in a secondary and fractional way, as are the activities.<sup>10</sup>

It seems out of place to criticize a system so well formulated and so close to actual truth. But it is necessary to point out a few flaws in a doctrine so well articulated. They are minor ones but, nevertheless, they leave the doctrine incomplete. Aristotle seems to pass over a difficulty that

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10 Ibid. 1177<sup>b</sup>, 31.

Plato had foreseen. Supposing a man really achieves the heights that Aristotle postulates. There is still; lacking complete self-sufficiency, and consequently an essential note of happiness. Aristotle seems to claim that man will approach this complete severance from all extrinsic aids as a mathematician would speak of one line approaching another line as a limit. But there must be complete independence. Hence, in this present life, where man is always dependent upon some comfort, upon food, friendship, social relations, these always manage to disturb the quiet of contemplation.

Secondly, not even the greatest minds can completely fathom truth; and there must always be an unsatisfied desire to know more. At the same time there will be the disquieting knowledge and conviction that something will mar the contemplation, at least death.

As has been said, Plato foresaw this difficulty and for this reason remained unsettled in his conclusion. The final words of the Philebus reveal this disturbing thought:

Nothing could be more satisfactorily shown than the insufficiency of both of them [wisdom and pleasure] . . . . In this argument the claims of both of pleasure and mind to be the absolute good have alike been set aside, because they have both failed in self-sufficiency or adequacy or perfection.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Philebus: 67a.

Aristotle's demands, the state of happiness can be acquired by only a few men. The rest of mankind would have to go along suffering hardships and trials to end up without having acquired their final end and, what is more, being incapable of acquiring it. They would have an existence the end of which was impossible of attainment. This is contrary to Aristotle's idea because he insists, in his criticism of Plato, that the end must be capable of attainment. He would have to admit that most of the human race would enter life, live in it, and pass out of it without ever having acquired the state of happiness. Then there could not be the application of his own principle, οὐθεν γὰρ μάτην ἡ φύσις ποιεῖ.

One final step would have eliminated the whole difficulty; a step which Aristotle comes close to taking, but which is never definitely made - the immortality of the soul. Had he included this last step, there could have been no reason for complaint. It would have been a simple thing for him to put happiness into the life of the soul after death, where there would have been no need of food, clothing, companions, justice, passions, or all the things that disturb. There would have been a perfect self-sufficiency, as well as that continued possession of happiness without fear of losing it. There would have been, too, the possibility of everybody's attaining that ultimate end by the pursuit of virtue while dwelling in this human habitation.

There must necessarily be a note of regret that neither he nor Plato concluded to such a rational statement. They both had in their body of thought all the ground for making such a conclusion. They were highly tempted to; and they had the conviction of mankind leaning in that direction. But what stopped them is just a matter of conjecture. It is not an easy thing, nor a logical thing, to say that they purposely refrained from the conclusion. The best explanation seems to be man's fallible intellect, hampered by what these men devoted their lives to ostracize from society, the pull made by fallen nature against man's true nature.

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